

# Common misconceptions

(True or false?)

- **There are no creeks near here.**

**False.**

Just because you can't see the creek, doesn't mean it isn't there. Access to the creek may be as close as your driveway! Your driveway flows into a gutter or ditch, which then feeds into a storm drain. These storm drains feed directly into creeks.

- **Only a little bit won't hurt. False.**

Even small amounts of soap, fertilizers, oil and chemicals will harm a creek, harming many of the animals living there.

- **Biodegradable products do not harm aquatic life. False.**

Biodegradable products need time to break down before they are safe. When biodegradable products enter a creek, they are generally still toxic and can kill animals and plants.

- **The water that goes down storm drains is cleaned before it is released into the bay.**

**False.**

Almost all storm drains empty directly into rivers, creeks and bays without any type of treatment at all.

Pet waste can be placed in a bag and put in the trash.



Properly washing water-based paint brushes keeps paint chemicals out of creeks.

## How much is too much?

Anything other than water that flows into a storm drain can harm the creek and the wildlife that depends upon it.

### To be safe for fish...

1 ounce  
of this product

needs to be  
diluted with this  
many ounces of  
water ...

Acrylic house paint	10,000
Liquid dish soap	32,500
Shampoo	769
Fruit drink	100
Household bleach	312,500
Biodegradable cleaner	17,857
General degreaser	100,000
One car wash	10,000

Source: Pollution Response Manual, 1998, California Department of Fish and Game, based on original research performed by the DFG Water Quality Laboratory.

## What can I do?

- Keep garbage and other debris from entering storm drains. This includes not allowing anything other than water to flow down your driveway.
- When walking your pet, it is courteous and healthful to pick up pet waste from yards and streets. Coliform bacteria in the waste can harm aquatic life.
- Use the least toxic products for cleaning and garden maintenance.
- Never exceed manufacturers' recommendations for use of chemical products.
- Dispose of home chemicals at approved household hazardous waste collection sites.
- Maintain your vehicle to keep fluids from dripping onto the pavement.
- Call the numbers on the back of this brochure for more assistance or to report violations.

Composting leaves and garden waste helps your yard and keeps debris out of creeks.



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**Answer:**  
**They all do.**



**A little bit can  
go a long way.**

It doesn't take a large amount of chemicals or soaps to pollute an aquatic system. If you were to rinse out a single paint brush that contained latex paint and let it run down the gutter, you would release enough chemicals to compromise one-quarter mile of stream habitat.

## Numbers to know

To report oil and chemical spills in open water:  
**800-OIL-SPILLS**  
(800-645-7745)

To report fish kills or poaching:  
**888-DFG-CALTIP**  
(888-334-2258)

To report someone pouring chemicals into a storm drain:  
**888-DFG-CALTIP** or your local city/county stormwater program

To dispose of used motor oil, pesticides and other chemicals:  
**800-CLEANUP**  
(800-253-2687)

To get information on clean boating practices [www.coastal.ca.gov](http://www.coastal.ca.gov) or call **800-CLEANUP**



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Alternate communication format available upon request. If reasonable accommodation is needed call Forrest Gardens at (916) 653-6420 or the California Relay (Telephone) Service for the deaf or hearing-impaired from TDD phones at 1-800-735-2929 or 711.

**It only takes  
a little bit**



**Question:**  
**Which of these  
will harm your  
local creek?**